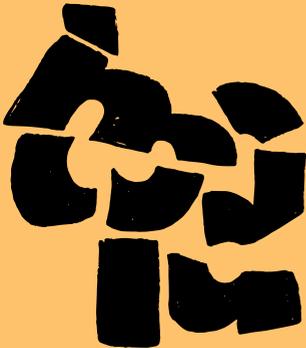




This pamphlet is one of a series produced as part of the research project ***Architecture after Architecture: Spatial Practice in the Face of the Climate Emergency***.

Each publication introduces a topic, concept or theme crucial to the project through a range of perspectives and asks 'What does it mean in the context of climate, architecture, and spatial practice?'

Based on ongoing discussions amongst the research team and others, the pamphlets aim to be reflective as well as projective. They are preliminary in nature, written to be accessible, and usually written by one author working in collaboration with other members of our collective, **MOULD**.



**Architecture after Architecture**  
**Spatial Practice in the Face of the Climate Emergency**

# CARE

## **How can architecture support ethical and environmental ways of being?**

Care is a way of being in the world that strives to make life more habitable for other people, animals, and the planet itself.

What does caring for someone or something entail, and why is this ethical?

What might care mean in the context of architecture?

*Care in architecture and  
urbanism is a starting point  
for not giving up on the  
future entirely*

*Angelika Fitz and Elke  
Krasny, Critical Care:  
Architecture and Urbanism  
for a Broken Planet*

# Taking care

Caring about someone or thing often starts through a process of making structural asymmetries visible, to challenge them. Asymmetries might involve gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, or even the fact of something being non-human. We can care for a forest and its protection, for example. This understanding of care emphasises a practice of generous interrelating that ensures no one or thing is exploited by another's way of life.

Care emerged as a concept in the Enlightenment era within conversations about ethics, again in 18th century discourses concerning the rights of man (and women), and later still, in 20th century moral philosophies that developed across the world, from Japan to the US and Europe. More recently, care has featured in various feminisms committed to exposing issues of privilege and oppression, and environmental movements that extend ethics to consider the rights of animals and the environment. Concepts of care for the more-than-human constituents with whom we share the planet by now span many fields and discourses. Philosophers and writers introduced terms such as land ethics in the 1960s. In the following decades, scientists studied the environment as an ecosystem of networked elements. At the same time, efforts increased to protect natural environments against ecocide, using governmental acts and laws for protection. Recent developments in critical theory extend a notion of community beyond the exclusively human to find 'vitalism' in other animals and materials, and argue for an ethics of care to include them.

As many of these philosophies and movements have shown, care is an activity that can transcend national borders and species boundaries, encouraging a planetary approach through which we might repair and maintain our world so that we can live in it as well as possible. "We" include people, animals, and the environment, all woven in a complex web that connects here and there. What

*The life of the other, the life that is not our own, is also our life, since whatever sense "our" life has is derived precisely from this sociality, this being already, and from the start, dependent on a world of others, constituted in and by a social world.*

*Judith Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation*

*We require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations [... because] we become-with each other or not at all.*

*Donna Haraway, Staying with the Trouble*

goes on over *there* (a hurricane, fracking, forest fires) affects us over *here*, when we understand our existence as being predicated on interdependence and the state of the planet. Ignoring global and planetary connections denies the fact of interdependent sociality.

Like any relationship, however, interdependencies can harm or nurture. Choosing what we care about and how we practice care is important. How might we avoid slipping from stewardship into possessiveness or gatekeeping, for example, if taking care of an area of land or a building or a person can become proprietary and therefore territorial? How might we prevent advocacy from inadvertently speaking for and therefore silencing others?

*Is the discursive practice of speaking for others ever a valid practice, and, if so, what are the criteria for validity? In particular, is it ever valid to speak for others who are unlike me or who are less privileged than me?*

Linda Alcoff, *The Problem of Speaking for Others*

*Staying alive - for every species - requires livable collaborations. Collaboration means working across difference, which leads to contamination. Without collaborations, we all die. [...] We change through our collaborations both within and across species. [...] Contamination makes diversity.*

Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*

Every one of us becomes an individual, different from others, at the same time as—and precisely because—we exist in relation with others. We move between the poles of individual and social every day, in living with ourselves and within communities. This process works when we are neither forced into sameness nor into antagonistic difference. Acknowledging that identity is formed and reformed through this ceaseless relationality enables us to ask how to resist forces of discrimination and exclusion, and to practice forms of care.

One means of resistance is to identify instances when difference is imposed on us, and to understand why. For example, modernity's attempts to justify the creation of private property bequeathed us a system that relies on race, gender, and class as cultural, ideological class constructs producing difference in order to amass capital in the hands of a few people, who are mainly white and mainly men. This process is antithetical to care not only because of its wildly unfair terms but because it drives antagonistic wedges between people who might otherwise find affinities and challenge injustice together.

The demonisation of gender within capitalism's patriarchal structure has secured unwaged labour as a naturalised resource. This labour is reproductive: women reproduce the labour force by feeding, clothing, cleaning, and caring for workers, and birthing their offspring. Through this system of exploitation, care has become feminised, and women's caregiving

*It is not the difference that immobilises us, but silence.*

*Audre Lorde, Your Silence Will Not Protect You*

*Activities that lie outside the production boundary - that is, in every nation, the great bulk of labour performed by women in an unpaid capacity - are left out of the GDP, as they are left out of the GNP. It is not a large step from that point to leaving them out of policy considerations altogether.*

*Marilyn Waring, Counting for Nothing*

*I feel embarrassed when I  
say feminism and people  
do not think revolution in  
service of every living thing.*

*Lola Olufemi, Experiments  
in Imagining Otherwise*

*Caring relations [...]   
maintain and repair a world  
so that humans and non-  
humans can live in it as well  
as possible in a complex  
life-sustaining web.*

*María Puig de la Bellacasa,  
Matters of Care*

capacities have been essentialised, devalued, and enmeshed in hetero- and gender-normative structures of labour. Care that might have originated as a form of empathetic engagement is instrumentalised as a construct of the state, in a process that is all too palpable in contemporary politics, where the commodification of care takes place under a thin veneer of 'caring.' Given such exploitation, any discussion of care requires that we resist idealised meanings that conjure associations with unmediated labours of love. We must liberate care to be a human (rather than feminine) responsibility. And care must be valued in monetary and non-monetary terms, as indispensable to both the mainstream economy and far wider dimensions of social wellbeing. Although the project of resistance and liberation has largely been taken up by feminists, it is one that empowers every living thing, because it creates a more just society. Understanding care in this expanded way highlights the importance of intersectionality in the struggle to create better lives. Such an understanding nurtures feminist, queer, anticolonial, and even trans-species, alliances.

# Architecture as we knew it

The concept of care is central—or rather, should be central—to architecture, because architecture concerns space, and spatial practices are social practices. Architecture can often help determine how people, animals, and plants share space—who or what is excluded, welcomed, exploited, cared for. Architects engaged in feminism and environmentalism have posited care as a central element of design, using care to inform the conceptualisation of projects, the sourcing of materials and labour, and built projects' ongoing usage, repair, and adaptation. When care underpins spatial practice in this way, alternative economic and organisational patterns often prosper.

But the history of architecture is, in many ways, the history of capitalism and the power associated with capital accumulation. This kind of architecture is entangled with the ruling power and its specific economic system in which developers, and other vested interests at individual, industrial and state levels, seek financial gains from land and property, and space is commodified to maximise economic productivity. Practiced within business-as-usual parameters, this kind of architecture concretises and preserves an organisational

*We need an economy capable of meeting the human rights of every person within the means of our life-giving planet.*

*Kate Raworth, Doughnut Economics*

system that puts capital before everything else. Spaces are often segregated by class so that wealthier people rarely encounter their poorer neighbours and those neighbours' experiences and needs. When capital has no space for care as a form of exchange or social relation, care is excluded from architecture.

*We view economy as referring to all of the practices that allow us to survive and care for each other and the earth. Economy, in this understanding, is not separate from ecology, but refers to the ongoing management—and therefore negotiation—of human and nonhuman ecological relations.*

J. K. Gibson-Graham,  
Cultivating Community  
Ecologies

An architecture that might exist after and instead of this capitalist architecture, could provide an antidote and resistance to forms of violence wrought on communities and habitats through natural resource extraction, exploitative labour practices, and asymmetries of power and economic wealth. Spaces could be used not for financialised consumption but for thinking, growing and being together, in cooperatives that reclaim public spaces. Such spaces could help us base dignity not on an ability to pay for services but on a capacity for empathetic, open-minded exchanges of ideas. This kind of architecture could flourish in a nationalised system where public services are provided for social and not profit-based ends. This kind of architecture, and political system, would consider not only rights but also the means available to humans, animals, and the ecosystem. Without the mental and material means to live well, without carefully designed provision, available locally, no one or thing can exercise the basic rights to safety and wellbeing that help them survive and flourish.

Many architects are now designing in more processual, open-ended ways to better consider natural habitats and the needs of

generations to come. Rather than understand buildings as things, these architects are thinking of them as relationships. This conceptual shift draws environments, people, flora, and fauna into a complex matrix where different needs are provided for, including those of the planet. An architecture that might exist after and instead of this capitalist architecture has the potential to cultivate diverse natural habitats and green ecologies as a form of care.

# Architecture as a practice of care

Inspired by these promising developments in architecture, and particularly their multi-generational understanding of the needs of future users, human and non-human, we came together as a group of architects and theorists to think about what an architecture after architecture (that is, after architecture-as-we-know-or-knew-it, after architecture-as-a-concretisation-of-capital-power) should be like. Imagining our research and writing process as akin to a natural form that grows from what already exists, we took the built environment and its different forms of architecture, and began identifying sociocultural, economic, and political forces and conditions that might either help or hinder careful, socially, and ecologically progressive architectural practices from flourishing. We want to take a care-ful approach in responding to inspiring, damaging, ambiguous, and ambivalent examples of architecture, and take responsibility in learning from every one of them.

*We have to ideate—imagine and conceive—together. We must imagine new worlds that transition ideologies and norms... This is collaborative ideation—what are the ideas that will liberate all of us? The more people that collaborate on that ideation, the more that people will be served by the resulting world(s).*

*adrienne maree brown,  
Emergent Strategy:  
Shaping Change, Changing  
Worlds*

What we know so far is that architecture as we knew it is a concretisation of capital power, and architecture after architecture has the potential to embody the power of multi-species affiliations. Caring architecture can usher

in forms of space that support ethical and environmental ways of being. There is much to learn from cooperative infrastructures, local production, the reuse of existing buildings or materials, multi-generational community engagement, volunteering, participatory workshops, skill building, and accessible environmental pedagogy. What is becoming clear is that we need to reconfigure architecture's old plans. We need to reuse the word 'growth,' wresting it away from GDP figures and towards principles geared at growing social and ecological wellbeing.

Imagine care as a building, and yourself standing inside it, with a pencil in your hand. What would you draw or write on its walls, what pictures and words could you use to describe what you want? In the spirit of collaboration, use the next page as a wall—write something:

*Rather than thinking of buildings as things, thinking of them in relationships—with ongoing environments, people, flora and fauna—that exist through time as well as in space, changes the approach fundamentally.*

Joan Tronto, Caring  
Architecture



**To learn more about specific architectural practices and projects that foreground care, listen to a podcast made to accompany this pamphlet, available now in the audio section of our website, [mould.earth](http://mould.earth)**

## Quotes

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